LYNCH, Father Oliver

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July 13-1981
(dated)

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Eleanor H. Swent
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July 13 - 1981
(dated)

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General Topic of Interview St. Elizabeth's Church & Fruitvale Neighborhood

Date 7-13-81 Place St. Elizabeth's - 1500 34th Av Oakland Length 45 min.

Narrator	Interviewer
Name Father Oliver Lynch	Name Eleanor Swent
Address 1500 - 34th Av. Oakland - CA	Address One King Av. Piedmont, CA 94611
Name & address of relative, friend St. Elizabeth Church Rectory 1500 34th Av. Oakland	Relationship to narrator [friend, neighbor, etc.] none
Birthplace Phoenix, Arizona	Length of acquaintance none
Birthdate 1916 (?)	Occasion of interview ONP assignment - Fruitvale history
Occupation(s) Franciscan Priest - teacher, pastor	

Interview Data

Subjects covered, in approximate order, spelling out names of persons and places mentioned

Side A - 45 min -

Estimated Time on Tape	Contents
feet - 5 - 10	came to St. E. in 1961 - prior experience in L.V.
20 - 50	St. E High School census 1961 - 500 - rose to 900, now rising,
	475 after slump. Reasons for this
50 - 100	ethnic comp.- 1961 - few blacks, 15-20 % Spanish
	early '70's - over 50% Span. Black pop. increased
	more in h.s. than elem. sch.
100	Now - H.S. 1/3 Black, 1/3 Span., 1/3 white/Filipino
	Bishop O'Dowd School only other Cath. H.S. in Oakland
* 120 -	F.V. "still a rather well-integrated neighborhood."
140 -	First Korean business has opened
150 -	Central American store on Fruitvale Av.

Use back of sheet if necessary

160 - Parish boundaries
180 - native American Indians
190 - St. E. H. S. students - Span. & White Rom. Cath. Black, 50-50
215 - Few Germans in parish since 1960
M/M Alfred Bucher
M/M Henry Dombrink
Schmitt & Stenger families
last German-speaking pastor, Fr. Lawrence Mutter, 1950's
pastors Mahoney, Lynch, MacDonnell
265 - Parish lost German identity in 1930's
275 - S.F. earthquake brought a lot of people to F.V.
(*) 290 - Neighborhood identity - "Definitely." Partly due to OCO - San Antonio. Fruitvale Community Organization - originally by invitation of St. E.
320 - Manzanita Center Parent-Teacher Group, Bd. of Ed.
330 - ethnic intermingling.
380 - Festival of Guadalupe fr. 1961
400 - Many Irish came after S.F. earthquake
(*) Portugese orchard workers came from Hawaii
Kennedy Tract - Port. & Italian - before Freeway
430 - annual festivals - Oktoberfest (German) St. Patricks (Irish)
Hawaiian (Portugese) Guadalupe (Mex.) late summer (Span.)
475 - WW II - influx after - possibly Span., not Black.
* 515 - Del Monte cannery - 1961 - 3 shifts a day - big employer now closing.
530 - F.V. less divided by race & occupation now than formerly
550 - most people work in & identify w. Oakland
575 - church windows - probably intended to be temporary
594 - Poor Clares moved to Los Altos (not so busy)
608 - Church "stabilizing influence in the community"
645 - F.V. had no riots in '60's, '70's
660 - drugs, low riders - "Few places for kids to go... no real park." No athletic field - baseball, softball, footba
680 - delinquency ← unemployment, crowded housing
700 - no substantial Chinese pop. Some Vietnamese.
No vacant rental housing. Black pop.
715 - Future - sees increase in Black pop.
Hopes will remain residential, same density.
730 - high concentration of elderly now.

Father Oliver Lynch
Interviewed by Eleanor Swent

The Catholic "Voice" for June 29, 1981, describes him as a "leprechaun" in a "warm brown robe" and says his retirement is forced by ill health. It was a surprise to find him slim, erect, not at all unhealthy looking, wearing a plaid cotton sport shirt and slacks. His attitude was gracious and business-like, and he was obviously experienced at being interviewed as a neighborhood leader. (Once, when I stopped the tape to check it, he said quietly, "I usually tape rather well.") His voice is good, and his statements were articulate and succinct. At times he demurred on providing statistical-information, but when I assured him that what I was interested ~~wa~~ in was his perception of situations, he was willing to make positive statements.

The other picture of Fr. Oliver, emerging from the secular press (in contrast to the twinkly-eyed, compassionate Irishman of the "Voice"), is the tough, "activist" neighborhood organizer. There was little evidence of this role in the interview, although he did assume responsibility for inviting in the organizers of the Oakland Community Organizations. And he obviously cherished the church's role in stabilizing the neighborhood.

He says there is a strong neighborhood feeling, and identity with Oakland. Historically, the German influence declined in the '30's, before his coming. In those years, F.V. was apparently quite divided by race and occupation, with cannery workers and (before the Freeway) orchard workers and truck farmers in the lower areas, by the estuary. The orchard workers, mostly Portugese, came in fromt Hawaii (date not mentioned). Germans and Irish came after the earthquake.

The church has ethnic festivals throughout the year, except for St. Patrick's not of long tradition. Early summer -- Hawaiian festival, for the Portugese. Late summer -- Hispanic. December 12 -- Guadalupe, for Mexicans. Oktoberfest -- German.

The influx after WW II was Hispanic, not Black. Blacks came later, and he sees them as increasing in the future. The neighborhood is now very well integrated, and activities which appeal across racial lines are well supported -- e.b., parent activities at the school.

When he came in 1961, the St. Elizabeth school was larger than it is today. Then 500, it rose later to 900, dropped off sharply when other parichial schools were opened, and is now rising again, to 475. In 1961, there were few Blacks, about 15-20% Spanish. The Black pop. increased more in the h.s. than in elementary. Now the h.s. is about 1/3 Black, 1/3 Spanish, and 1/3 White-Filipino. Of these the Blacks are mostly non-Catholics, although Blacks comprise the largest group of people taking instruction to become Catholics.

Neighborhood changes yet to come are indicated by a recently-opened Korean business on E. 14th St. There are a very few Vietnamese and Chinese. He didn't mention American Indians until Iasked, and then said that there are some.

There is also a strong concentration of elderly people, many nursing homes, convalescent hospitals, and the church has an active ministry with them.

Fruitvale had no riots in the '60's and '70's, which he credits at least in part to the stabilizing influence of the church. The chief problems are the usual ones -- crowded housing and unemployment. Also -- peculiar to Fruitvale -- there is no place for the young people to go. There is no real park, and no athletic field. He laments this.

He would like to see more small businesses and more employment, but he also wants the neighborhood to remain residential, at the same density as now. The Neighborhood Organization has successfully fought off a planned high-rise.

FATHER OLIVER LYNCH

July 13, 1981

Interviewer: Eleanor Swent

Oakland Neighborhood History Project

Fruitvale Neighborhood
Interview with Father Oliver Lynch, St. Elizabeth's Church
July 13, 1981
Interviewer, Eleanor Swent

Q: When did you come to St. Elizabeth's?

A: I came in -- I was installed as pastor on June 18, 1961. Prior to that, I had spent 12 years in a downtown parish in Los Angeles. And prior to that, I had been a teacher, so it wasn't my first work in the inner city, nor my first work with the Spanish speaking. But it was the first time I'd been in a parish as big as this, and with as many different activities, especially with the high school.

Q: How large was the high school at that time?

A: A little bigger than it is now; it was around 500, I'd say. And then in the course of the next five or six years, it rose up to 900. And then after that, it dropped off rather sharply for a while, and now we're up to around 475.

Q: Do you have any idea why it peaked or why it dropped off?

A: Yeah, I do. I think that part of the peak was the increased demand for private schools. And I think that happens quite often in areas like this. Where unfortunately the public schools are quite often not able to keep up with the demands and then the other thing too is that the public schools can't really be selective, as a private school can.
And I think there's a difference there. But the thing that caused the dropoff was I think the fact that they opened a new Catholic high school in the Hayward-San Leandro area, Moreau High School, and we had always had a large number of boys and girls from that area, who came in on the bus. And with the opening of Mreau high school, a large number of them started going there, closer to home. And that made a real difference for us. And then I think too that the ethnic changes in the neighborhood brought about some changes in the school population.

Q: What have those ethnic changes been?

A: Well, in the high school, it was a larger number of black students.

Q: In 1961, what was the population?

A: There were very few blacks in the high school, and not too many Hispanics. And the elementary school, for instance, when I first came, had about 15-20 percent families with Hispanic surnames, and by the early '70s, it was over 50%. So that there was really a substantial change. In the high school, and number of black students increased sooner than it did in the elementary school. The elementary school is still predominantly Latin American, but there is a growing number of blacks. In the high school, the student population is pretty evenly divided. The black students, the Hispanic students, and for want of a better word, I'll say the English-speaking -- by that I mean the Anglo and the Filipino too. Because Filipinos basically speak English. Those would be the three or the four major groups -- Spanish, Black, Filipino, and Anglo.

Q: And the black high school population has grown more than the black elementary school population?

A: Yes.

Q: Do you have any idea why that happened?

A: Probably because many of the parishes here have elementary schools which would be open to black parents who would like to send their child to an elementary school. But St. Elizabeth's and Bishop O'Dowd are the only two Catholic high schools in the Oakland area. There is St. Joseph's in Alameda, and they've had a growing number of b;ack students too. Although I would say that as far as the resident population is concerned, the percentage of blacks in Alameda is considerably lower than in Oakland.

Q: Does the school population reflect very accurately the resident population?

A: It seems to me that it does, yes. Now we haven't gotten a report on the latest census. It's supposed to be available I think either in the fall or around the beginning of the year. But I think that will bear out the fact that this is still a rather well integrated area. That we have a large number of Hispanics -- Latins; we still have a reasonably large white population; there are a growing number of blacks -- the numbers have grown; and also a growing number of Filipinos. And I notice an interesting thing: the first business sign for a Korean place, over on Fruitvale Avenue. And it seems to me that when businesses open up and they cater, say, to a particular national or ethnic group, that's due to the fact that some type of survey would show that there would be enough people there to create a demand for it. There's a store up on Fruitvale Avenue that caters especially to Central Americans, the Puerto Ricans, Guatemalans, and so

forth, with food and products that are really indigenous or a part of their culture, and that would be in demand by people who have come from that culture.

Q: What is your parish area? I think it's larger than the Fruitvale area, isn't it?

A: Not really, no. We go roughly from 27th Avenue to 51st Avenue, and from the Estuary to 27th Street, which continues into Davis Street, all the way over.

Q: You don't go all the way up to the freeway then?
A: No, above 27th Street there is St. Jarlath's parish.
Q: So your parish is somewhat smaller than Fruitvale then.
A: Yes, and when you go further up Fruitvale, then it becomes the Dimond District.
Q: What about American Indians?
A: We have some, but there's not a large number. There are some from Arizona, and also some from the Northwest. They identify themselves as Native Americans.

Q: Are the students Roman Catholics?

A: Practically all of the Hispanics are. And I would say a major portion of the whites are. A percentage of the Blacks are, and others are not. I don't have the accurate breakdown, but it would be maybe around 50-50.

Q: So they're coming for schooling then, apart from the religious connection?

A: Yes -- and well, I think there's also an element of that, that a good number of them come from active Protestant families, Baptist and Church of God and so forth, the churches to which Black families would belong. And they really feel that it is important that they would get the moral values that are a part of our curriculum because the students are expected to take part in the religion classes as well as the academic subjects. And we've had very very few classes ever say, "I don't want my boy or girl to take these religion classes." Very very few.

Q: Is there any active participation by the original German families? Are they still significant?

A: A good number of the older people in the parish would still be considered a part of those original German families. But over the course of the last 20 years a good number of them have moved away. Some of the residents who lived here a long time have died. But we have a few families that would be second or third generation that are still living and active.

Q: Could you name them?

A: Well, one family would be the family of Mr. and Mrs. Alfred Bucher. And the Dombrinks, yes, although most of the children of Henry Dombrink no longer live in the area. But Henry and Mary are still part of the parish. And who else -- when I want to remember, they don't come to mind. Schmitt, the Schmitt family from 36th Avenue. The Stenger family, they are still here.

Q: What about pastors?

A: No, the last German speaking pastor was Father Lorenz Mutter, and he was pastor in the early part of the 50s. Since then we've had two Irishmen and now a Scotchman.

Q: No Spanish pastor yet?

A: No, Father Dennis Mahoney, and then myself, and now Father John MacDonald.

Q: They don't sound very Spanish.
A: No, or very German. Father John is the 13th pastor.

Q: As I recall, the first group were all German born.

A: That could be. I don't think it was required, I think it was just that most of the priests were born in Germany and were immigrants.

Q: Do you have any idea when the parish lost its German flavor?

A: I would say in the 30s. By the time Father Victor Brucher became pastor, they no longer had German sermons, although there was some German spoken, as far as people coming in and wanting advice, and things like that, but the parish was no lonmger what you would call German speaking. But I think someone like Henry Dombrink would be able to give you more information about that. Because he was around the whole time.

Q: Have you heard people reminiscing about the earthquake? Do you know what effect it had on the parish?

A: I know some. The earthquake brought a lot of people into the Fruitvale area. Yes. People I guess who suffered the loss of a home in the fire, and then a good number of them moved over here afterward. There was quite an influx. I don't have all the names of those who did that, but I think you'll find some in those booklets that you have. I'm sure that people like Henry Dombrink could give you more information.

Q: Another question that perhaps you could help with is --

do the people in this area think of themselves as residents of Fruitvale?
Is there a feeling of neighborhood identity?

A: Yes, definitely. Definitely. And I think a great deal of that is due to the parish and also to the work of the Oakland Community Organization.

Q: Is that the name of the organization?

A: That's the name of the city-wide group. The local group would be the San Antonio-Fruitvale Area Organization. It's a coalition of smaller neighborhood groups that are working primarily for social change. Improved neighborhoods. Peaceful but effective resolution of neighborhood problems.

Q: What part does the church have in this?

A: We invited the original organizers into the neighborhood, in order to get it started, and then a large number of our parishioners are active in it also.

Q: Where do they meet?

A: Well, the neighborhood groups for the most part meet in homes. The larger group meets here sometimes; sometimes at one of the other schools, depending on the area. They meet sometimes at Manzanita Center, over on -- I think it's 27th Street, about 21st Avenue -- and that center is one that the community organizing brought about. They were the ones that were responsible for the building of that center.

Q: Are the ethnic groups -- how do you feel about their overlapping? Do they intermix very much, do you think?

A: I would say yes and no. It depends on the type of activity. Socially I don't think there's a great deal of intermingling. If for instance a black group were sponsoring something, I don't think a lot of the Mexicans would go. For that reason. But ifit's something that concerns the whole neighborhood, then, yes, I think there would be more likelihood of a getting together of the groups.

Q: What about church and school activities?

A: Well, at church and school activities, you get a pretty good cross-section because it's the type of activity that has something to say to all of them, not just because they're Latins or because they're black, but because they're parents. And that's what they have in common.

Q: Is there any group that predominates -- in the officers, say, of your school parents' organization?

A: Yes. I'm not familiar with the latest board for the P.T.T., as they call the parents' group, but it's usually been pretty representative of the different ethnic groups in the school. And that's true more and more of our board of education and also of our parish council.

Q: Do you do personal counselling as well?

A: Yes, I do.

Q: Has there been any difference in the call for that kind of activity -- does one group come to you more than another?

A: Probably the whites and the Spanish speaking more than the blacks. Part of that may be that there are not as many black Roman Catholics. But on the other hand, as far as people interested, say, in becoming Catholics are concerned, the largest number who express an interest are blacks. So we have a program, called the Rite of Christian Initiation of adults, and the participants have been mainly black people.

Q: I understand that the church has been very active in the neighborhood annual festivals. The festival of Guadalupe, and so on. And of course those have changed. When did that festival come into prominence?

A: Well, we started celebrating it in 1961. The Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe is December 12.

Q: Did you start it?

A: No, it really, like so many things, it came out of the community. A family in the parish came to see me and said that they would really like to see us start celebrating this feast because it was important to so many people, and they would like to see us have what is known as the Mananitas, where they sing Happy Birthday, and they would see that we had mariachis [typical Mexican musicians] for it, so I said okay. And so that was in 1961, and we've had it every year since then. And as time went on, the number of people attending it grew, as it became more widely known. And since then, practically all of the parishes that have any Spanish speaking people at all, have some kind of a Guadalupe celebration.

Q: Do you have any other celebrations of that kind?

A: In a way, yes. Ethnically, in the early days, there was a large German group, but there was also a large Irish group of people who lived in the parish, many of whom came over in that period after the fire and the earthquake in San Francisco. And then in the course of time, Portuguese

and Italians. A good number of the Portuguese came from Hawaii, surprisingly because Hawaii had imported orchard workers and farm workers from the mainland, or the islands, and they went to Hawaii, and then from Hawaii, they came to the United States. So --

Q: When was that?

A: I'm not too clear on that, but as far as I know, it was the early part of the 1900s. And there's one area of the parish, the area that we call the Kennedy tract, it's below East 14th St. and roughly between 23rd Avenue and Fruitvale, that was heavily Portuguese and Italian in the early days, and before the advent of the freeway, it was largely vegetable gardens. Small plots and things like that. But the freeway and the growing industrial development changed that.
So that yearly we usually have four celebrations. For the most part they would be a dinner and a dance. We have the Oktoberfest, that's the German celebration.

Q: Now is there any continuity with the one started by the Germans?
A: Well, I think they used to have celebrations, but this is a more recent -- how will I say -- renewal of that, a reintroduction of it.

Q: How long has that been going, do you know?

A: Oh, 8 or 10 years.

Q: And it was in response to a community request?

A: Yeah, it was partly a fund-raising venture but also a response to the families, and a lot of people who were born and raised in the parish but who have since moved away, come back for that celebration. If you want to see the old timers, there's where you'll meet them. And then the other one is the St. Patrick's Day celebration; we have the Irish celebration in March.

Q: When did that begin?

A: We always had some kind of St. Patrick's Day celebration, from before I was here. But recently it's become a little more formal. And then for a good number of years in early summer or late spring, we've had a Hawaiian celebration. And that was basically for the Portuguese. Plus then the Our Lady of Guadalupe in the fall. And then the Spanish-speaking people usually have some kind of fiesta toward the end of the summer. And then during the course of the year, the schools have ethnic celebrations. They celebrate the Fifth of May, which is Cinco de Mayo, the Mexican celebration. And they celebrate Martin Luther King day, and days like that.

Q: You mentioned Central Americans. A lot of the Spanish of course are not Mexicans. But they all group together as Hispanics even though they...?

A: Oh yes. Some of them, like the Puerto Ricans have a couple of rather strong Puerto Rican organizations, in Oakland. I'm sure that there are organizations like that for people from Chile and Peru. Although we don't have too much direct contact with them. With the organizations.

Q: Do you have any feelings about what happened in the parish during the Second World War?

A: I know a lot of the young men from the parish went, were in the service, and a lot of the families, like the wives and that, were employed in the war industry. But as far as what happened immediately after the war, I'm not too clear on that. I think generally, Oakland, like other areas, received an influx of people, because a lot of the service men, as you know, who came out here, were impressed by California, and when they got out of the service, they came out here, looking for work and a place to settle. And the Fruitvale area received its share of --

Q: Excuse me, I want to check the tape.

A: I usually record pretty well.

Q: Yes, you do. I just wondered whether you had heard people say whether there was any major shift in this area at that time.

A: I don't recall anything specific, no.

Q: The big influx of blacks for instance, would not have come at that time?

A: No, it didn't come to this district then, no. I think that the influx of the Spanish speaking people could have begun at that time. I know it did in Los Angeles. But not to the extent that it took place in the late fifties and sixties and seventies.

Q: You mentioned the freeway. The MacArthur freeway?

A: No, this was the Nimitz.

Q: It must have been named after the war. Was it built after the war?

A: Yes, I think it was finished in the early fifties.

Q: And it had a big effect.

A: Yes, I think it was finished in the early fifties. Because I remember I came up here several times while I was still located in Los Angeles, and at least the part of the freeway through here -- this would have been, say, the middle fifties -- maybe toward the late fifties -- it was in operation then.

Q: I noticed in the paper a few days ago that Del Monte is closing its Fruitvale cannery. Will this have any effect on the parish?

A: This is just the final step, because they started phasing it out some time ago. So instead of working at this time of year, three shifts a day as they did when I first came, it was cut down to one, and from what you mention, then they're probably going to phase it out completely.

Q: Were you very aware of the canning cycle?

A: Oh yes, very much so. And it affected a lot of the people who lived there, because a lot of them relied upon the canneries for their work, and when the canneries were operating at full force, they were good paying jobs, and they were very steady. It was seasonal work in the sense that during the season they worked steady, and a lot of them would get good overtime. Then of course when the fruit and vegetable season passed, there would be no work at all. But they always looked forward to it starting up again. So that would affect the area that I mentioned, the Kennedy Tract area, and generally I would say this whole area along East 14th Street. A lot of people there gravitated toward the cannery.

Q: So there is kind of a division in this area then?

A: Well, not as much now as there was formerly. I think formerly, when you get to the upper part of this area, there were fewer blacks and fewer Hispanics up there. Now of course, the areas are all pretty well integrated.

Q: Do most of the people own their homes in the upper part?

A: No, I would say -- there are a good number of home owners, but I wouldn't be able to say whether one area was significantly different from the others. The Oakland Community Organization is completing a study on real estate transactions in this area, and I think they would have some very interesting information, if you would like to talk to them.

Q: Is it your feeling that most of the people here work in Oakland?

A: I would say that the majority of them work in the Oakland area rather than in San Francisco.

Q: Do you think that the people here are attracted to the city [San Francisco]? Do they go there very often? Do they think of themselves as suburban, in other words?

A: I don't think so, no. I think they feel that San Francisco has interesting things to offer, but I think they see Oakland as their home, and as being self-contained and self-sufficient.

Q: And the neighborhood feeling is quite strong, you think?

A: Yes. There's a good amount of local pride.

Q: At the beginning, I didn't ask -- where were you born?

A: Oh, I was born and raised in Phoenix, Arizona. I'm a Westerner.

Q: You were already acquainted then with the Spanish and Indian populations.

A: I've lived in California since 1927, so I'm a long-time resident of the state.

Q: I have one question that someone else asked me about the glass windows in the church. Apparently there's a theme of grape clusters in the windows, and someone wanted to know whether it was of particular significance to the German community -- was it significant beyond the general Christian symbolism? Were the Germans from the wine-growing areas of Germany?

A: I don't believe so, no. I think that that was the symbol that was decided upon at the time the windows were made. It's my understanding that the windows that we have at present were originally intended to be just temporary, and that later on they would be replaced with more windows along the traditional lines, you know, that would have, say, like Gospel scenes or Bible scenes. At least that's one story that I heard. But that next step was never taken. And these are very satisfactory. The advantage that I see in them is that they really allow much more light in the church than the old style would, and for me anyway, that's a definite advantage.

Q: Now some of the old buildings -- for instance, the building of the Poor Clares -- is that long since gone?

A: It used to be right across the street. And I'm not familiar with that whole historical development, but I think the Poor Clares wanted to move to an area which would

not be quite so busy.

Q: Are they still around?

A: Yes, they moved to Los Altos, down on the Peninsula. But they moved I guess in the early 50s.

Q: Were there any other things that you would like to say? I think I've asked most of the questions that I wanted to ask. Is there anything you would like to say about the church's influence on the community or the interplay between them?

A: I think that the church has had a stabilizing influence on the community. I think that at a time when there was a considerable amount of departure from -- I don't like to use the word "flight" but maybe that's what it was -- you know, a flight from the cities to the newer areas that were opening up in suburbia --

Q: Now who was flying, the whites?

A: The white families, yes, because they were the ones that were here. And I think that they were going for several reasons. Some of them were going because their families had grown, and the homes had become too small. To add 2 or 3 rooms to an old house was expensive and not too satisfactory. So a good number of them decided that their economic situation had improved, you know, so they just moved to another area. A good number of them moved to the area around St. Pascal's, that would be the area around Knowland Park, that whole area there. San Leandro, San Lorenzo, Walnut Creek, and areas like that. Others I think moved because they weren't particularly happy with some of the ethnic changes in the neighborhood. And so they would sell, and a lot of the sales then were made to, say, the spanish speaking people who were looking for a place. They were moving in from some other place. And they were looking for a place. And so they started to buy. But I think that a lot of people who had children in school, they liked the school, and they liked the parish too, and they felt that there was a good family spirit. The Franciscans had always really been concerned about them, and helped them in as many ways as possible. They were involved in parish activities, so they stayed. And a good number of them, families have stayed, say, through most of these twenty years, all of their children have gone through the schools here. And I remember not too long ago, I had a wedding, and both the bride and the groom, who were of different ethnic backgrounds -- one was Irish, and the other was Spanish -- both graduates of St. Elizabeth's High School -- said how glad they were that they had this multi-ethnic experience going through school. That they felt that that had really given them a much better preparation for the world into which they were going to

move. And that made me feel good.

Q: I moved here in 1966, and I remember there was great alarm about the Fruitvale area, it was considered a tinderbox at the time, and it never did --

A: No, we never did have any of those problems like they had further East or in the western part of the city. During that whole time, we never did have any riots or anything like that. There was some vandalism, but never any more than that. So we were very happy about that.

Q: You may claim some credit for that.

A: Well, maybe. I don't know. Though I think that so many factors enter into things like that, that it's hard to say that any one thing would really be the key factor.

Q: Have you had much vandalism here on your property?

A: Some, especially the petty kind of things like writing on walls, and broken windows. During for instance sports activities, the kids would mess up the rec rooms. I think --I guess from one point of view the invention of the marking pen was a great help, but from another point of view it was a disaster! [laughs]

Q: What about drugs? Are you aware of that?

A: Oh, yes. There are drugs in the area. And there are certain spots that they are, you know, pretty heavy. And then recently you know we've had our share of the "low-riders." One of the problems I think -- shared with other areas -- is that there are very very few places for kids to go in this area. There's no real park in this whole Fruitvale area. There's a little park over here at Sanborn, and then the Foothill Meadows on Foothill Boulevard.

Q: What's this Manzanita Park?

A: That's really not in -- it's way over on the edge of the Fruitvale area, so it's quite a ways. And as a result then, there's no area where it's big enough -- and Manzanita doesn't have one either -- for a baseball field, or a softball field. So they have to go up to the Dimond area, somewhere like that. And our football team from the high school has to find other places to practice, because there's nothing in the area that would be really big enough for a full-scale baseball game or football game. And if you try to play in a playground, then there are always problems with the windows. (chuckles) I think that's one of the contributing factors [to the drug problem], yes.

And then the other thing, too, I think has something to do

with -- well, two other areas. One would be employment, because there's a large number of the young people, older teenagers and the young adults, that are out of work, and not much prospect of them getting work. And the housing. When you have a family that's crowded into a house or an apartment, it's very different for kids of different age levels to really feel comfortable at home. And it has an influence on their scholastic work too. Because without quiet, it's difficult to study. I know that they like to study with the radio blaring, but if in addition to one radio, there are three or four, and all sorts of -- and then the children, you know, the younger brothers and sisters -- it's difficult. So -- they tend to gravitate to other places outside their homes. And if there are no other satisfactory places, well then, the street is the place where they would gather. But these are very commonly recognized problems. Things that are shared with many other areas.

Q: You mentioned that there was a Korean business. What about other Asians?

A: There are some Chinese restaurants in the area, although I don't think there's a substantial Chinese population. Like many Chinese restaurants, you know, their patrons would be primarily I guess the white E n g l i s h - s p e a k i n g .

Q: Have you had many of the Indo-Chinese refugees?

A; Vietnamese? Yes, we've had some. We don't have a large number. I think that there'd be more probably up above in, say, St. Jarlath's or St. Lawrence O'Toole [parishes].

Q: Why?

A: I think they haven't found it easy to get accomodations for them here. This area is usually pretty well filled as far as rentals are concerned. There's turnover, but one family moves out and it doesn't take very long to fill up a place; others will come in.

Q:. What sort of changes do you anticipate?

A: That's a good question. I probably see an increase in the black population. That seems to be the indication. As far as building is concerned, we hope that the area will remain primarily residential. And recently we made an effort to get the city to change their zoning that will not allow a greater saturation than it has at present. So that -- to buy up, we'll say, a half a block or a block of residences, and replace it with a hundred-unit building -- that is not permitted by the building code. We were able to prevail upon the city to keep the present [code].

Q: There was pressure?

A: Oh, yeah. Yeah. And one of those problems is that those families who are displaced, there's never any really concerted and effective way of relocating them. And you get then a big building with lots of apartments in it and there are lots of problems that come along with it too.

Q: I notice that there seem to be a number of convalescent hospitals or retirement places, for older people.

A; There is a high concentration of elderly people in this area. Yes. I don't have the figures, but we have a Sister John Bosco that works with the older people. Or the Department of Aging of the Catholic Charities would have a breakdown of the statistics like that. But it's one of the highest concentrations in the city, in this area around here.

Q: What does Montgomery Ward have now?

A: It used to be a full-scale retail store, along with the mail order department. Now it's primarily mail order and I think it's an outlet for discontinued lines, counter-worn articles, things like that.

Q: So this has been another decline in employment?

A: To some extent, yes.

Father Oliver leaves St.Elizabeth with love

By Reggie Finney

Maybe it's the warm brown robe that falls comfortably over his shoulders, or the twinkle in his eyes that says there's so much of living in life, but I can't help thinking of Father Oliver Lynch as a Franciscan leprechaun who has made the Fruitvale area of Oakland a very special community during his years as pastor of St. Elizabeth's.

A picture of the young crew-cut pastor 20 years ago and the gentle priest of today have the same engaging smile, just a few more lines of compassion added. He has watched a generation grow up in a very troubled era and shared in the Vatican II Church leaping over centuries for a rebirth of its own.

While ill health has forced Father Oliver to leave St. Elizabeth, he will continue to enrich the Oakland Diocese with his spirit and leadership in the Department of Clergy Education.

Reflecting on his early experience at St. Elizabeth's, Father Oliver said he had come to Oakland after serving 12 years as administrator and pastor at parishes in Los Angeles. "One of the first things I was asked to do was to give a talk to CCD teachers on ecumenism—something I hadn't really thought about. It sent me back to the books and really turned me on to the possibilities of Vatican II."

Just prior to coming to Oakland, Father Oliver was touched by an experience that portended the new directions of Vatican II. It was a meeting with the Migrant Ministry at San Juan Baptista that included Fathers Alan McCoy, Ronald Burke and John Garcia.

"It was a very exciting time," the Franciscan explains. "Here was a group of men aware of many trends developing in the Church—a greater emphasis on Scripture, new outlook on the liturgy, and a deeper involvement with the poor in the sense of advocacy for the farmworkers."

Father Oliver noted, "These priests did a lot to be a leaven among priests. Their dedication and openness to change helped a great deal when Vatican II was starting. It was especially significant that the Church was more closely allied with the poor—and in this case the migrant farmworkers."

"Vatican II did several things," the gentle priest reminisced. "It called on us to be more aware of ourselves as a community of faith. It called for what seemed to be very revolutionary changes in liturgy.

There was a time for laughter for Father Oliver Lynch (left), Bishop John Cummins (center) and Father John MacDonell, following the Mass last Sunday at which Father MacDonell was installed as pastor of St. Elizabeth Church, succeeding Father Oliver. (John Wright photo)

The people were somewhat reluctant to accept at first. I think we moved too fast. If I were doing it again, I would take twice as long to do what we accomplished."

When Father Oliver came to St. Elizabeth's, it was a predominately English-speaking parish with Anglo-Saxon families—Germans, Irish, Portuguese—families that had lived there for a long time. There were Spanish-speaking people in the parish, but they weren't evident and didn't make the impact as they do now.

"St. Elizabeth's really had a long history of active concern before I came," Father Oliver observed. "Our first social involvement was with the farmworkers. When I was a boy I worked on farms and in a box factory for 22½ cents an hour so I had an appreciation of their lifestyles. It took a period of time, but over the years we continued to develop a good social awareness through the leadership of very fine people."

Father Oliver was deeply concerned about the young people who "suffered very much from Vatican II. It was difficult for everyone to cope with the changes, so much confusion. A whole generation came

--please turn to next page

Father Oliver reflects

• continued from page 15

thorugh that period without really having a strong grasp of their faith."

"Today's young people seem to be able to put things together," Father observed. "It isn't a matter of rote. We are helping children experience what they believe. There seems to be more interiorizing of moral, Christian values."

One of the changes Father Oliver witnessed at St. Elizabeth was its evolving into a bilingual parish. "The growth of the Spanish, principally migrants from Mexico, but also Central America, New Mexico and Arizona, began shortly after I came. Our celebration of the Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe was the beginning of the Spanish-speaking involvement in the paraliturgical life of the parish. Leadership in the Spanish community was helped by several things, but especially by the Cursillo Movement."

"I made a Cursillo in Stockton in 1962. It was a great help to me," Father reflected, "both in my personal growth and development and my understanding of the Church as a community. Out of the Cursillo Movement came a great deal of leadership over the years. I was the first diocesan director."

The vitality of St. Elizabeth's parish life is well known in the diocese. "I feel good about our ability to develop strong people participation in the life of the parish. We have had good parish councils with decision-making power and good parish boards of education."

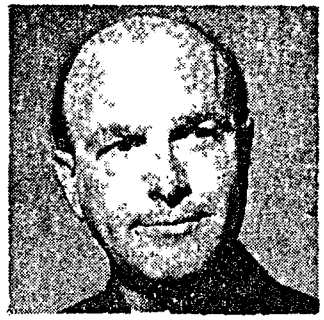
The stability of the parish, Father Oliver feels, is primarily due to the fine schools. "Many people stayed for this reason and other young families moved into the parish because of the schools." He praised the dedication of the Sisters, both the Dominicans for the school and the Holy Family for CCD.

St. Elizabeth's has been an integral part of the community and has been instrumental in promoting the growth and development of important agencies. "We were involved in establishing the Spanish-Speaking Unity Council that grew out of a coalition of agencies that met in the parish buiding on 35th. I was happy to have been a part of that as well as setting up the Clinica de la Raza. I served on their first board of directors. The parish now has a credit union that serves the community."

What does he like to do? The priest smiled, "One of my main relaxations is spending time with people. I like to walk and hike, I'll take time this summer to read some Scripture scholars, a little science fiction, and maybe even reread Tolkien."

Father Oliver was born in Phoenix, Ariz. He attended the Franciscan Seminary high school in San Luis Rey and the theologate at Santa Barbara. He was ordained in 1938 at Old Mission Santa Barbara and has a master's degree in philosophy from Catholic University. He taught philosophy at the seminary for nine years before going to parish work in Los Angeles.

leisure arts / Father Basil De Pinto



Reimann's 'Lear': music for our time

Twentieth century composers have not had an easy time of it. They have had to drag behind them the enormous load of classical and romantic tradition, with all it implied of tonality and harmony considered to be part of a "law of nature," absolute and unchangeable. Every attempt to deviate from this apparent monolith was greeted with scornful and even violent rejection.

Gradually a different kind of sound has made its mark. Dissonant, atonal, often opaque in structure, it has nevertheless begun to make sense when used with taste and skill and fitted to a dramatic fabric that cries out for it. This, I believe, is what accounts for the success of Aribert Reimann's masterful setting of "Lear."

The self-deluded king, driven half mad by the treachery of those he loved, is virtually a model of

daughters fit precisely the cruelty and cunning they embody. The storm on the heath skillfully allows Lear to echo its fury with his voice, but it does not overwhelm him and he can be clearly heard without shouting. The orchestral interlude that follows the storm is a marvel, where sound is almost a portrait of silence.

The one moment that seems to demand a lyric touch, the reunion of Lear and Cordelia, benefits from the composer's uncompromising consistency of approach. After this the massed cello sound accompanying Lear's entrance with the body of Cordelia is, fittingly, the most moving scene in the opera, and the quiet finale is the perfect crown of the work.

The June 12 performance was led with astounding proficiency by Gerd Albrecht, conductor of the Munich premiere. His unerring sense of timing and dynamics allowed for the flow required by the fiercely complex score. The singing was on a generally high level even though this type of music is not kind to the voice; the English diction was fair to good.

David Knutson repeated his bravura performance as Edgar from the Munich cast and received an ovation. In the title role, Thomas Stewart used his voice wisely, never forcing it, thus maintaining the energy needed to project character.

The Catholic Voice / September 20, 1982

Seventy-five years of memories recalled by 'old' altar boys

By Sister Mary Jean Meier, S.M.

There will be a celebration at Our Lady's Home, Oakland, this week. On Saturday, Sept. 25, Bishop John Cummins will offer a Mass of Thanksgiving at the Home at 4 p.m. to commemorate 75 years of caring for the elderly at the present site in Oakland.

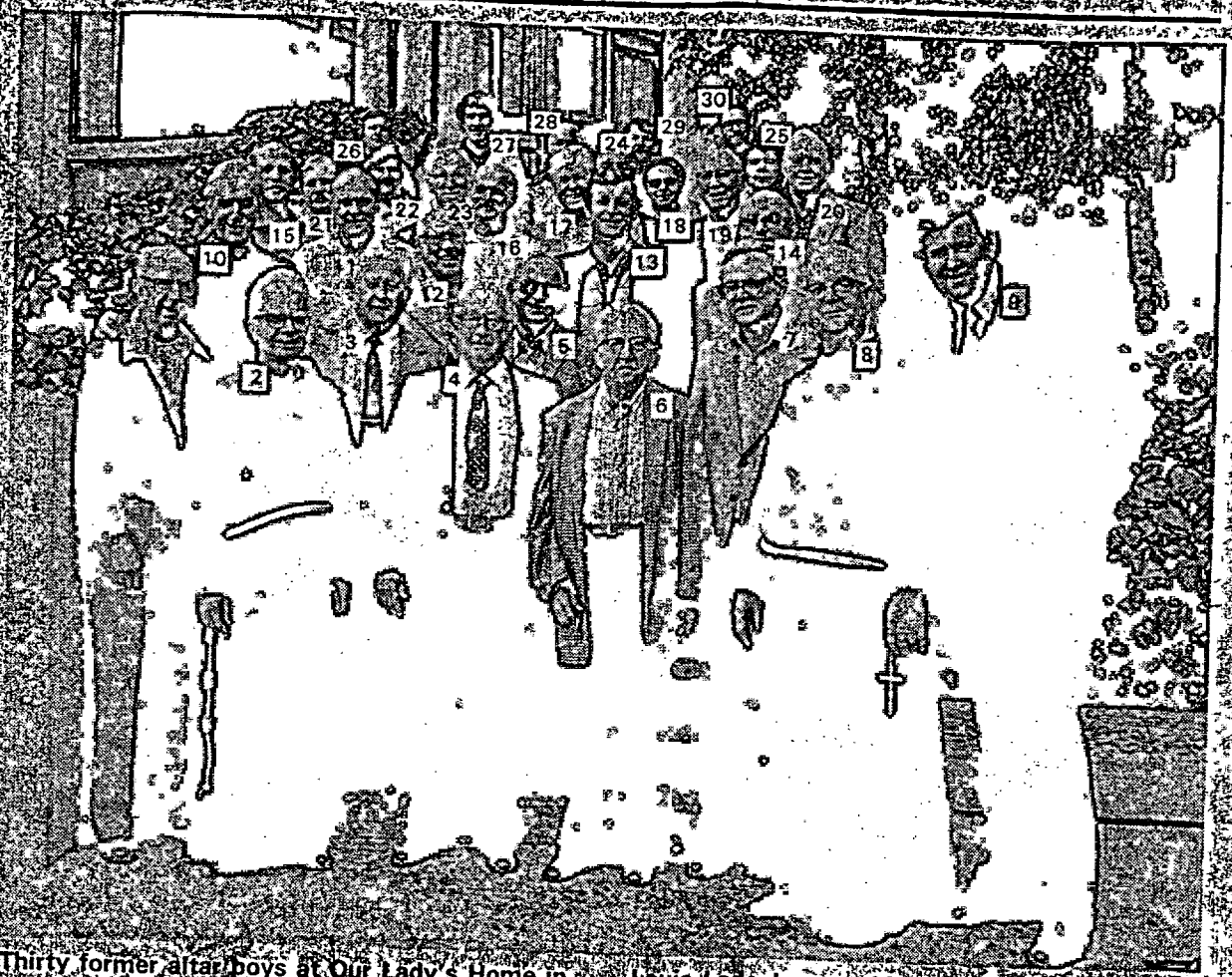
Recently there was another celebration at the Home. Thirty former altar boys gathered for Mass and lunch. They returned to renew friendships, to share stories, and to reminisce of childhood days in East Oakland, of St. Elizabeth Parish, and of "tours of duty" serving Mass at Our Lady's Home.

The three Franciscan concelebrants of the Mass – Franciscan Fathers Michael Weishaar, Alfred Boedekker, and Peter Krieg – were all former altar boys. One of them remarked, "I believe I got my vocation coming here day after day to serve Mass."

The living history of East Oakland was present. Joe Rist, 83, a current resident of the Home, represented the oldest generation. Some men remembered the Rist home near St. Elizabeth Church. They recalled that the Rists had a cow which was walked daily in search of good pasture.

Father Alfred Boedekker was full of stories. "It was hard," he said, "living next door to the Home. My mother would make us kids keep quiet even at the dinner table so we wouldn't disturb the novices praying in the convent."

Father Alfred also told of his first experience as an altar boy when he was six. "It was a Sunday ... Father and the Bucher boys were ... a tiny child. Others recalled their days of working



Thirty former altar boys at Our Lady's Home in Oakland gather for a reunion photo following an afternoon of sharing stories and memories of their days of service in the residence chapel. They are: 1. Joe Cecil, 2. Father Peter Krieg, 3. Richard Dombrink, 4. Henry Dombrink, 5. Jack Kiely, 6. William Dombrink, 7. Bernard Thien, 8. Father Alfred Boedekker, 9. Paul McCarthy, 10. Father Michael Weishaar, 11. Josef Schmitt, 12. Louis Ladenburger, 13. John Korte, 14. Joseph Bonne, 15. Bill Promes, 16. Bob Promes, 17. Tom Bucher, 18. Chuck Pargett, 19. Joseph Rist, 20. Tom Mullen, 21. Harold Promes, 22. John Milano, 23. Tom Sheridan, 24. Steve Fitzpatrick, 25. Jack Heath, 26. Tom Hansen, 27. Bill Sheridan, 28. George Stenger, 29. Mike Kleven, 30. Gary Kleven. (John Wright photo)

even at the dinner table so we wouldn't disturb the novices praying in the convent.

Father Alfred also told of his first experience as an altar boy when he was six. It was a Sunday afternoon. Father and the Bucher boys were walking up the street for 2 p.m. Benediction at the Home. They passed our house and called out, "Tony, come with us. You can serve—and hold the boat." A very fearful Tony went along saying to himself, "Boat? I don't know anything about boats. What will I do?"

Much to his relief, as he walked into the vestry Father handed him the boat filled with incense. "I breathed a sigh of relief," he said. "Even at six years of age I could manage that."

Chuck Pargett told of his serving days when he "borrowed" his older brother's old Plymouth. He was 13 and had the early morning Mass assignment at the Home. He'd tell his serving partner, "I'll be by to pick you up for Mass tomorrow." He would then sneak out of the house, push his brother's car down the driveway so no one would hear the motor, and then proudly drive the car to Mass. That lasted a few mornings until he was discovered!

Louis Ladenburger recalled how the priest would often stop at his home on 35th Ave. (just two doors from the Home) for a visit and a second cup of coffee after Mass.

At the reunion there were many stories associated with the early 6:30 Mass and the fabulous breakfasts the Sisters served afterwards. The men recalled being awakened in the dark by means of a string tied to a toe and being tugged awake by a serving partner living in a nearby house. They remembered Sister M. Francis warning them to "sit up straight" so the tiny pleats in the surplices would not wrinkle.

They told of cloth napkins at the breakfast table, of experimenting with butter pats which could stick to the ceiling, and of graduating from being a torchbearer to holding the third patten to ringing the bell at Mass. Some of the younger men remembered the day they wore the new scarlet cassocks for the first time—a great occasion.

One of the Cecils remarked, "I was master of ceremonies at midnight Mass for three years. I earned the honor because of all of the early morning duty I took." Many others remembered serving midnight Mass at Christmas.

The Dombrink boys lived just across from the Home on 34th Ave. They boasted of hearing the bell ringing for Mass, getting up and dressed, and making it to the sacristy in time for duty.

Stories about the Sisters abounded. Joe Bonne's parents owned a French laundry on Foothill Blvd. He remembered Sister Margaret Mary teaching him to speak English when he was a tiny child. Others recalled their days of working at the Home and earning some money for school after they had graduated from altar boy duties.

They told of their mothers helping the Sisters mend the linens and of being allowed to run the old elevator—even though the stairs were faster.

Al Bucher who served Mass in 1917 still has a prayer book which a Sister gave him when he served. His brother, Father Marcian Bucher, sent greetings for the reunion from Santa Barbara.

The Annals relate incidents such as "A Bucher was married in the chapel in 1937." "Mrs. Carriere died quite suddenly. Her son, Father David, celebrated the Mass." "Mrs. Magdalene Bucher died in 1940; her son, Father Andrew, was present." "Sisters M. Aloysius and Hildegarde were with Mrs. Boedekker, our next door neighbor, when she died."

Today the former altar boys, flower girls, dining room helpers' answer to such titles as "grandpa" and "great-grandmother." It would be hard to work out a family tree which would adequately show the family relationships. John Korte calls Louis Ladenburger father-in-law; Joe Rist proudly claims Father Peter Krieg as his nephew; and Paul McCarthy's uncle is Father Boedekker—all of them altar boys!

The history of the Fruitvale district of East Oakland is closely intertwined with the altar boy group. They remembered the arrival of the Sisters and residents from San Francisco at the time of the 1906 "fire" when they were transported across the Bay on the river boat Modoc.

Others told stories of the white-veiled novices who had their novitiate at the Home from 1920-1924. Still others relived the sight of hundreds of people whom the Sisters fed each month during the Depression.

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They are: 1. Joe Cecil, 2. Father Peter Krieg, 3. Richard Dombrink, 4. Henry Dombrink, 5. Jack Kiely, 6. William Dombrink, 7. Bernard Thien, 8. Father Alfred Boedekker, 9. Paul McCarthy, 10. Father Michael Weishaar, 11. Josef Schmitt, 12. Milano, 23. Tom Sheridan, 24. Steve Fitzpatrick, 25. Jack Heath, 26. Tom Hansen, 27. Bill Sheridan, 28. George Stenger, 29. Mike Kleven, 30. Gary Kleven. (John Wright photo)

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The accounting and bill-paying had been handled by Douglas Field, an attorney, for a monthly fee of $90 but Copland reported Field had little time or inclination to continue and recommended his stipend, plus $100, be transferred to Burd.

Burd has been doing legwork for the Association for the past month for $100. In that time she enrolled 16 new businesses who either joined or promised to in the next few months.

Burd told the board she would be "promoting Montclair" and came up with two ideas to do just that. One was publication of "collector's" posters similar to those done by the Piedmont Avenue open house committee and the other was creating a T-shirt to promote Montclair Village.

The board felt the MBA coffers couldn't cover both projects at once so opted for the T-shirts.

Copland called for five volunteers to serve as a watchdog committee to help implement the new sign ordinance which goes into effect in December.

"We should talk to the offenders and explain our main goal is to get brand name signs off the outside of buildings and put them inside. We should suggest ideas to them and take their financial situation into consideration," he said.

At the same time the MBA should make it clear it expects compliance with the ordinance which Copland pointed out was "adopted five years ago after three months of hearings and there were no complaints then."

Volunteering to serve on the sign committee were John Call, Abbott Charles, John Selby, Dyan Bieto and Marcia Dore, an "interested homeowner" who attended the meeting at Copland's invitation.

In other business last week the out-going president, Charles, noted that there was "no news regarding Little Daisy's deviation from the Montclair zoning regulations." The MBA is not thrilled with Little Daisy's new pinkish-blue stucco facade which was done without city approval...a "bad precedent" said Charles.

Following the meeting Copland told *The Montclarion* he was looking forward to being president again (he served an earlier term in 1976-77) as two of the projects he "godfathered" then are to be realized in the coming year.

They are the undergrounding of utilities and implementation of the sign ordinance which has been under a five-year moratorium to help merchants amortize their investments in non-conforming signs.

Pressures from OCO groups have made numerous city bureaucracies respond. OCO has convinced the city to put stop signs in many hazardous intersections around east and west Oakland. The Fruitvale Fighters, a group in East Oakland. pressured the city to enforce the leash law and pick up stray dogs around the clock because dogs were spreading disease and threatening children.

West Oakland OCO members are particularly concerned with illegal junk yards, run as businesses. At least 10 such illegal yards operate, blighting the neighborhoods.

A crucial OCO issue is crime. Since November, 1980, 21 OCO neighborhood groups have met with 16 beat officers to discuss crime "hot spots" in their areas. But it takes persistent efforts to set up these meetings, two to three weeks in advance.

Hannah Tatman, head of the Mead/Athens Neighborhood

OCO

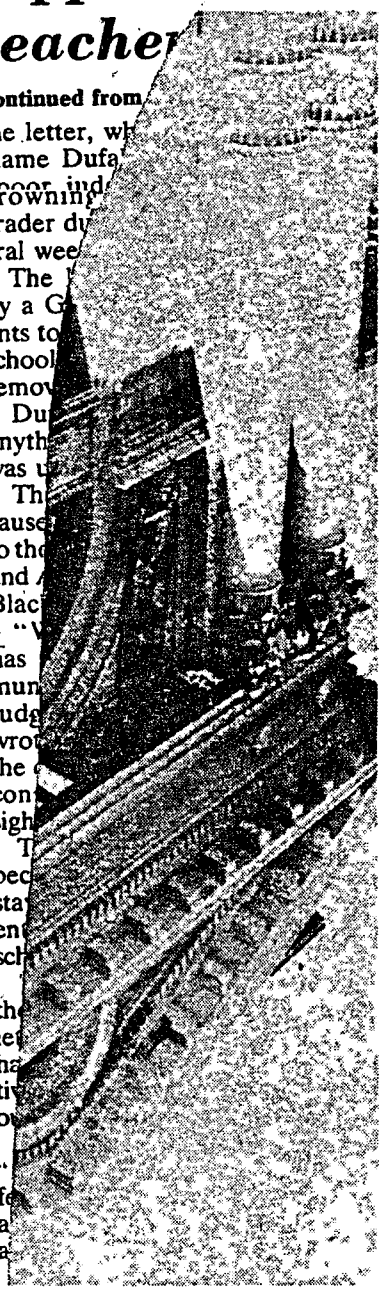
Group, has lived in Mead more than 30 years. Ms. Tatman remembers when she could walk down her street without fear. Now, living alone, she watches truant boys on her street every day.

Though her neighbors are afraid to walk the streets to evening meetings, because of the violence, Tatman said she is determined to organize more beat officer sessions. "We've been having such trouble with the 11- and 12-year-olds," Tatman said. "I saw one little boy go in my neighbor's house. Then his father made him bring the things back to the man. Then I watched that boy come back two hours later and do it again." Tatman called the police and the boy is now on probation.

OCO is not financially tied to Oakland's political leaders. Funding comes from foundations, churches and corporations like the Bank of America, Clorox and Foremost-McKesson. OCO also holds fundraising events, like last year's "OCO-othon," when hundreds walked three times around

OCO bought it. Every Saturday and some week days when Eric Lofgren, the most active worker, can make it, OCO has house-rehabilitating work parties. Willie Monroe, West Oakland member, has hardly missed a Saturday and never misses a chance to recruit workers at monthly Senate meetings. All building materials are donated and OCO plans to sell 123 Willow to an OCO member when is finished.

Parents support teache



council members said they questioned funding OCCUR for the HUD program while the final determination hasn't been made on the CETA program.

"I think OCCUR is a valuable organization, but I fear the spectre looming out there of the uncompeted audit," Mary Moore said. "For a short, happy time we thought the answers (regarding the CETA audit) were all in, but that didn't last too long and now DOL has said we may have to pay ($414,000) out of the general fund."

Paul Cobb, executive director of OCCUR, said the organization was in a "Catch-22" situation because it no longer had any CETA funds but could not use HUD money to pay for staff time to clear up the CETA audit problems.

The council eventually decided by a 5 to 3 vote to approve the HUD contract with OCCUR conditional upon the completion of the CETA audit. Marge Gibson, Frank Ogawa and John Sutter voted against continued funding of OCCUR.

The Legal Aid Society, which has held the contract to provide legal assistance for economic development ever since the community development program started six years ago, weathered an effort

Merchants have new president ...

Continued from front page

position on one-way streets and Copland agreed to meet with the city traffic engineer before the next meeting.

The board also hired Carolyn Burd, Montclair housewife, as administrator at a salary of $190 per month. Her duties will include accounting, bill collecting, disbursements (such as paying for the Village security guard service) and public relations.

The accounting and bill-paying had been handled by Douglas Field, an attorney, for a monthly fee of $90 but Copland reported Field had little time or inclination to continue and recommended his stipend, plus $100, be transferred to Burd.

Burd has been doing legwork for the Association for the past month for $100. In that time she enrolled 16 new businesses who either joined or promised to in the next

council meeting had sided with Legal Aid, and the council voted 5 to 2 to continue the contract with the public interest group.

Economic development director George Williams had said Legal Aid's emphasis was on affirmative action and employment, while a private firm, such as Harrison, Taylor and Bazile, which his office recommended receive the contract, would put emphasis on marketing.

Mayor Lionel Wilson and Marge Gibson voted against the contract, arguing that proposals should be sought from a number of other firms, including Legal Aid.

Other third-party community development contracts went to four housing groups, the Neighborhood Tree Organizing Program for planting street trees and two economic development groups.

OCO prospers without any government funds ...

Continued from front page

who later served as OCO's president for two years. In classic Alinsky style, the two Jesuits worked with Matarrese and other parishioners on an issue the neighborhood had identified: keeping open the Fruitvale Latin American library. Despite the federal government's withdrawal of support, St. Elizabeth's and the Oakland Training Institute kept the library open by a petition drive.

All of OCO's positions and issues are identified by neighborhood people. OCO's membership is divided into four major areas: 50th to 80th Avenues, West Oakland, Elmhurst and San Antonio-Fruitvale. These areas fall almost entirely within the "flatlands," the area below MacArthur Freeway. Low and moderate income families, many of them racial and ethnic minorities, live in these areas.

There is a certain moral tone about the organization, probably because of its prominent church backing. One of its continuing campaigns has been against prostitution, which OCO says threatens Oakland's children and attracts drugs and violence.

OCO members identify neighborhood leaders and then call meetings at which individuals raise issues and the group decides what to do.

Pressures from OCO groups have made numerous city bureaucracies respond. OCO has convinced the city to put stop signs in many hazardous intersections around east and west Oakland. The Fruitvale Fighters, a group in East Oakland, pressured the city to enforce the leash law and pick up stray dogs around the clock because dogs were spreading disease and threatening children.

West Oakland OCO members are particularly concerned with il-

Lake Merritt for contributions.

Last year, OCO received about $45,000 from foundations, $52,000 from Oakland businesses and almost $25,000 from community fundraisers.

Randy Blackman was OCO treasurer from 1979 to May, 1981. Born in Oakland, his father was one of thousands of blacks recruited for defense work from Louisiana and Texas in the 1940's. Blackman has worked with the Post Office for 16 years. He had no more fundraising training than a three day workshop in November, 1980.

Blackman has seen the budget increase from $81,936 in 1978, when he first joined OCO, to a projected $155,000 in 1981. Individual dues and government backing are unacceptable.

"I wouldn't even consider dues," Blackman said. "If people feel as I do about it, once they contribute, they contribute again.

"We wouldn't be our own organization if we went to city hall. We can't depend on the federal and city government to solve all of our problems; they're too involved with their computer print-outs."

Another way in which OCO seeks to build a spirit of cooperation among neighbors is its house on 1234 Willow Street.

The house was abandoned and ready for demolition in 1978 and OCO bought it. Every Saturday and some week days when Eric Lofgren, the most active worker, can make it, OCO has house-rehabilitating work parties. Willie Monroe, West Oakland member, has hardly missed a Saturday and never misses a chance to recruit workers at monthly Senate meetings. All building materials are donated and OCO plans to sell 1234 Willow to an OCO member wher is finished.